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HISTORY OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN EDWARDS COUNTY, ILLINOIS.

MRS. E. S. BARKDULL.

When we look at the magnificent churches in the city of Chicago, with the fine choirs and crowds of dignified worshippers, it seems almost an impossibility that down in little Albion, the county seat of Edwards County, the services of the Episcopal Church were held long before Chicago or Cook County were in existence. Yet such is the fact. Cook County used to be a part of Edwards County, with Albion as its capital. The exact date on which the first services were held there is uncertain, but it is a fact on record that lay services were held in the log cabins of the pioneers before the year 1819.

George Flower, one of the founders of the city of Albion, says in his volume, "The English Settlement": "A native of the Island of Guernsey, Mr. Benjamin Grutt, read the Episcopal service in a room set apart for a public library. The religious service commenced in Wanboro and Albion in the early part of the year 1819." He also says: "If I remember rightly, it was in the following year that the Rev. Mr. Baldwin, an Episcopal missionary, preached several sermons in Albion and gathered the Episcopal members together and organized a church, designated as St. John's Church. Mr. Pickering was an active member and gave efficient aid to this early Episcopal organization."

We read again in "Two Years' Residence in English Prairie, Illinois," by John Woods (1822): "The Rev. Thomas G. Baldwin, in his organization of St. John's Church, * * * was encouraged by William Pickering, Judge Wattles, John Woods, Benjamin Grutt, Daniel Orange, James Carter, William Funks, David Hearsom and others.

"In 1820 it was agreed to have public worship at Wanboro, and Sunday, 25th of April, divine service was first

held in a log cabin that was built for a school room. Prayers from the service of the Church of England, with a few omissions, were read by one of the inhabitants, and a sermon by another. This meeting was well attended, and has been continued every Sunday in the forenoon at 11 o'clock, and those of the Church of England and Quakers both attend it.

"At Albion there is a place of worship in part of the market house, in which divine service is performed every Sunday in the forenoon. Prayers and a sermon are read by one of the inhabitants. I twice attended. The service was from the Church of England, with variations. I think they style themselves Unitarians."

It may have been within two years later that the Rev. Mr. Baldwin came—say in 1821 or 1822—when he tarried six weeks in the house of Mr. John Woods, Sr., who had previously read the service of the Episcopal Church himself.

The Rev. Dr. James Craik, late rector of Christ Church, Louisville, Kentucky, in his little book entitled, "Historical Sketches of Christ Church, Louisville," says: "One devoted minister visited Louisville two years before the commencement of this enterprise (namely, the beginning of the church in 1823). The Rev. A. G. Baldwin traveled as far as this point and possibly farther. He preached in 1820 or thereabouts."

A history of the beginning of the Episcopal Church in Edwards County would by no means be complete without prominent mention of the Rev. Benjamin Hutchins, who was rector of St. John's Church, Albion, for over fifty years. He came here from Philadelphia in the spring of 1838, labored most energetically all his life, suffered unheard of trials, spent a fortune in the work of the church, and lies buried with his family in the old Albion cemetery. His resting place is marked with a beautiful celtic cross, the only Christian monument in the old historic burying ground. In his honor was built a beautiful brick rectory, that is inhabited by his successors.

The Rev. Benjamin Hutchins was a brilliant preacher, a talented scholar, and a faithful parish priest. He baptized over 400 persons during his rectorship and buried almost 500 persons. He had a large family of beautiful children,

but they had a tragic death. In April, 1857, malignant scarlet fever was contracted, and in one week's time six of the beautiful children of the Rev. and Mrs. Hutchins were taken away by the cruel monster, and two others a week later. It is said that the dread disease was contracted from a box of new books that had arrived from Philadelphia. All of the children were buried by the Rev. William Armstrong.

The Rev. Mr. Hutchins was induced to leave his work in Philadelphia through reading of the great scarcity of laborers in the vineyard of the Lord in the Illinois wilderness. He had read of the efforts of the Rev. Mr. Baldwin in organizing St. John's Church, Albion, and that the effort was likely to be given up, for the reason that the missionary board had been unable to do anything towards sustaining a rector. In 1838 Mr. Hutchins decided to locate in Edwards County. He had several services in the court house, but not being able to secure a dwelling place he left and went to Vincennes, Indiana. He lived there for five months, visiting Albion once or twice each month for Sunday services.

A revival and reorganization of St. John's Church soon followed, and some who were present when the Rev. Amos G. Baldwin made his visit twenty years previously rallied around the church banner and remained faithful to it until they died. Removals and death had lessened the number, yet William Pickering, James Carter, John Tribe, Samuel N. Dalby and others were still living and were among the faithful. Benjamin Grutt, in the Church de Esprit, New York City, was among the little band in spirit and membership. Children and grandchildren of the early members of St. John's were baptized in families. Services were held in the old court house and a Sunday School was instituted.

At a public meeting of the friends and members of the church held March 28, 1842, there were present the Rev. B. Hutchins, H. J. Hutchins, David Hearsum, F. B. Thompson, M. D., Joel Churchill, John Brissenden, James Carter, Sr., John Richford, Joseph and Robert Williams, Bryan Walker, W. C. Mayo, H. Ronalds, and George Ferriman. At this meeting the following were elected vestrymen: Henry J. Hutchins, Joseph Williams, George Ferriman, John Pitch-

ford, James Carter, Sr., David Hearsom, Joel Churchill, Robert Naylor, and Samuel N. Dalby.

In September, 1842, the cornerstone of a brick church was laid on a lot given by George Flower and his wife, Eliza Juliet. The Rev. B. B. Kettenetty, rector of St. James Church, Vincennes, Indiana; Rev. B. Halsted, rector of St. Stephen's Church, New Harmony, Indiana, and Rev. B. Hutchins, rector of St. John's, Albion, were the officiating ministers. Within the cornerstone was placed a box containing record and prayers. The Rev. Kettenetty laid the stone with the usual words and ceremony in the name of the Blessed Trinity. The church was built and was consecrated on June 24, 1843, by the Rt. Rev. Philander Chase, D. D., Bishop of Illinois. On the same occasion fifteen children and adults were baptized and twenty-four were confirmed. The building had a vestry room attached to it and was furnished within the chancel with a reading desk, baptismal font, pulpit and altar. The structure was entirely free from debt. Very soon after an addition was made in front, of brick also, being a tower with vestibules, gallery and belfry, having likewise a bell and an organ. A bishop's chair was placed in the chancel. And now began a succession of rectors, beginning with that of the Rev. Benjamin Hutchins, who became rector emeritus, on through many years. The Reverends Benjamin Hutchins, T. S. Brittan, G. P. Comings, W. Clatworthy, Robert Ryall, William Morrall, Henry Humphries, W. H. Tomlins, J. B. Blanchat, J. N. Chestnut, Angelo A. Benton, D. D., W. J. Datson, W. B. Thorn, T. W. C. Cheeseman, George Harvey Trickett, Edward Simpson Barkdull.